

## Czech Society in-between the Waves

Věšíňová-Kalivodová, Eva

Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

[www.peerproject.eu](http://www.peerproject.eu)

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Věšíňová-Kalivodová, E. (2005). Czech Society in-between the Waves. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 12(4), 421-435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506805057099>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter dem "PEER Licence Agreement zur Verfügung" gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zum PEER-Projekt finden Sie hier: <http://www.peerproject.eu>. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

**gesis**  
Leibniz-Institut  
für Sozialwissenschaften

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under the "PEER Licence Agreement". For more Information regarding the PEER-project see: <http://www.peerproject.eu>. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Mitglied der  
**Leibniz**  
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

# Czech Society in-between the Waves

Eva Věšíňová-Kalivodová

CHARLES UNIVERSITY, PRAGUE

---

**ABSTRACT** The article explores gender roles in Czech society during the 1990s, seeking in them continuity with the socialist past as well as divergence from it. The state-socialist construction of social space brought women (and men), in the course of 40 years, into a post-feminist situation – they got beyond the second-wave claim of the public sphere for women. The communist epoch gave birth to an illusory gender equity while it preserved a specifically modified public/private divide and ‘empowered’ attitudes of the population that were characteristic of pre-feminist consciousness. This complex legacy has been used by the (male) political power of Czech ‘neoliberal’ democracy post-1989, while it has disadvantaged women, who have been becoming rapidly unequal to men. The article examines whether Czech accession to the EU will enhance gender equality in a post-communist society. Feminist action (of which there are some signs in Czech society), the study concludes, is needed more than ever.

**KEY WORDS** accession ♦ Czech ♦ equality ♦ European Union ♦ gender ♦ policies ♦ post-communism ♦ post-feminist ♦ pre-feminist ♦ state socialism

Although the 1990s only ended recently, which does not give us much of an analytical distance, I would still like to attempt a historically grounded feminist reflection of gender roles in Czech society during the past decade. I seek across those years continuity with the not too distant socialist past as well as divergence from it. My focus is mainly upon Czech society, but issues of broader relevance for Eastern and Central Europe are also touched upon.

The question central to this article is: do Czechs live in a pre-feminist or post-feminist society? My argument is that it is both: some characteristics point to a pre-feminist stage, others to a post-feminist era.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL INSIGHT

A major post-feminist – in the sense of post-second-wave – characteristic of the current situation of Czech society is its post-socialist nature itself. Referring by second wave to those feminist political movements in western democracies that, in the 1960s and 1970s mainly, imposed upon (inter)national policies the issues of women's inequality in male-dominated society, I view the current situation in those democracies as post-feminist because they are largely devoid of a vanguard of massive feminist political protest against the persisting inequality of women. By 'post-feminist', however, I also refer to the actual impact of the second wave upon those democracies, which has been multiple and profound. Defining by 'post-socialist' the social stage after the Czech replacement of state socialism by real parliamentary democracy and a market economy, I see in this stage the residual effects of state-socialist policies. These policies – having prevented (among others) free development of feminist attitudes and expressions of feminist will, but having invited/pulled women into the (state-socialist) public sphere – did, in their own manner, a part of what the second wave demanded and to a degree achieved: Czech women were 'made to conquer' the public sphere. It is in this sense that the post-socialist Czech society bears post-feminist characteristics. Nevertheless, the anti-democratic nature of the state-socialist emancipation of women, and the still influential reaction of people, women and men, against it can account for other characteristics that I would define as 'pre-feminist'.

To expound the origin and development of such a complex mixture of attitudes related to the experiences of the Czech population, and to explain, too, its part in the construction of gender roles, I employ a historical reflection of the beginnings and 'progress' of state socialism. Unlike, for instance, Nash (2002: 292), I share the need to examine the past with other Czech feminists and/or 'gender studies scholars'. Such an examination expresses a search for one's own feminist position within Czech society. It also shows an effort to comprehend and describe a 'different gender sensitivity' acquired in state socialism and persisting in the course of its democratic transformation (Fábián, 2002: 278). This sensitivity is felt across the post-communist<sup>1</sup> region and its exploration equals a major theoretical groundwork for the scholars in this region. While these scholars test possibilities of western feminist theories and contextualize the notion and category of gender difference itself, they explore what happened in terms of gender construction and specifically gendered resistance under state socialism. Those happenings, more than problematic in their consequences, might be perceived as gendered developments *alternative and parallel* to the second wave that was transforming the West.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, they might be understood as developments the

consideration of which is not to be 'skipped' (on the grounds that Eastern and Central Europe is adopting a western political/economic 'life style' anyway), but which are inherent to the socially historical, empirical and theoretical scope of feminist thought in pursuit of possible social change.

The gender construction of the Czech socialist project, which prevented and supplanted the second wave in Czech society, should be discussed with regard to the ways in which it used national sentiments and accomplishments – including the national feminist tradition – marking the (gendered) birth and development of the modern Czech nation. The Czech women's movement first emerged in the mid-19th century (Věšíňová-Kalivodová, 2002; Malečková, 2000) and then developed in order to raise women to become the helpers of the male builders of the nation – the good mothers and educators of generations to come. Understandably, the differences between the position of man's 'helper' and 'equal partner' soon started to fill the genuine feminist agenda of 19th-century Czech women. However, up to the end of the 19th century, the mainstream of the Czech women's movement followed a distinct 'national course'. Its achievements concerning women's education, and also its first steps in promoting the idea of women's professional life (Hendrychová, 1999), were 'inherited' by an important sympathizer with the movement, T.G. Masaryk. It is well known that this successful Czech politician in Austria-Hungary and first president of the independent Czechoslovak state (1918) helped Czech women to win suffrage (1920), and helped their and his belief in the social equality of men and women to be achieved also through the new constitution (on the merits of the 'Feminist President' see Nash, 2002).

However, the fight for actual implementation of the constitutional article on equality continued and was a hard one. In the interwar period (1918–38), the Czech women's movement diversified politically. It was mainly its strong liberal stream<sup>3</sup> that effectively promoted social, economic and political equality of men and women and its encoding into the state structures. This stream continued to pursue the 'national course' of the women's movement taken in the 19th century, which was becoming increasingly more politically sophisticated and modified under the changing political conditions of a young democracy. It led a fertile dialogue with the institutions of Masaryk's state, and became a recognized political agent. Largely thanks to the pressure exerted by women activists upon political structures, and to their work among the population, the social position, or the gender, of Czech women was changing. Growing numbers of educated and/or qualified women now lived various kinds of public, working lives. A change in women's position and agency might have been a phenomenon that, among other things, informed Czech national consciousness – or, rather the dynamic through which the national enters into the configuration of identity.

Outside the liberal stream, other women were publicly active. Side by side rather than in collaboration with the liberal organizations of middle-class women, there existed organized efforts of social democratic and communist women, with their own international contacts (Burešová, 2001: 31, 35, 41, 308/note 72). Already in the pre-Second World War era, a wide range of socialist ideas found support with a considerable proportion of the Czech population. Pro-socialist tendencies in the women's movement may have been enhanced by talented and prominent women writers of the time (with Marie Majerová and Helena Malířová at the forefront), whose work subscribed to idealistic cultural theories of the artistic avant-garde. Its members linked with socialism their hopes for the total liberation of all individuals. To women, it promised liberation from a paternalistic bourgeois culture that had entrapped them in the private sphere.

The Second World War started for Czechoslovakia with the Munich Agreement that sacrificed its sovereignty for the chimera of peace in Europe. It ended with the liberation by the Soviet Army that secured, according to the Allies' plan, the future Soviet hegemony in this country (as well as in others). On the whole, the war policies strengthened pro-Russian and pro-socialist sympathies among Czechs.<sup>4</sup> They helped to prepare the Communists' victory in the parliamentary elections in 1946, and the 'Victorious February' of 1948 when the Communists took over in the government (see, for example, Margolius-Kovály, 2002; Sayer, 2000).

Thus, the Communists could prepare and start building their project of a Czechoslovak socialist future, being helped by strong national sentiments. Czechs had felt strongly positive about the independent state and Masaryk's Republic. However, this Republic felt betrayed by the democratic countries that had once been regarded as political examples. The fact that France and Great Britain signed the Munich Agreement caused a general disillusionment from which Czechs eventually awoke during the war while reorienting their sympathies towards the Soviet Union. As for the women's movement, it could always – as a social agent in a nation craving for sovereignty, or in a young small state bordering on mighty powers – only contest the dominating gender constructions as related to national policies. And the national, being valued and permanently endangered, rarely conflicted with gender. For women claiming the public sphere, therefore, work with and within political movements and parties shaped by men was the usual mode of operation. Then, also, the Communists could expect women's support for the new political course – because women's national feelings were hurt similarly to men's. Moreover, by offering a project of women's emancipation, the Communists could appropriate the ideological work of the left-oriented stream of the interwar women's movement. And they smartly made use of the

enhancement of social equality of women, which had largely been accomplished by the liberal feminists.

#### FROM STATE SOCIALISM TO POST-FEMINIST POST-COMMUNISM?

When the socialism of hopes became state socialism, its regime quickly violated the ideals embraced by many people before and during the war. Allegedly, women were 'freed', but they were also forbidden to remember the times when the women's movement was an independent political agent. To threaten women into obedience to the Communist Party line of women's emancipation might have been one reason behind a most appalling Stalinist-era show trial against Milada Horáková, a lawyer who had opted for a career in the state social welfare system, a women's leader<sup>5</sup> and prisoner of war during the Nazi occupation. After the war, Horáková became a leading figure in the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (the party of President Edvard Beneš and a strong rival of the Communists) and a member of parliament. She resigned her seat in parliament after the Communist takeover in 1948; she was arrested and accused of conspiracy against the state (she did try to mobilize cooperative opposition of democratic forces against the Communists). Probably because of her persistent criticism of the anti-democratic regime during the interrogations, she was labelled as the leader of a dangerous (non-existent) plot. She was sentenced to death, and, in 1950, was the first woman to be executed in 20th-century Czechoslovakia (the victims of the Nazi occupation apart).

Equalized and unified by political discourse, and by taking a working part in the socialist project, women and men actually had to cope with the loss of a part of traditional gender difference. However, the regime – due to its lack of ideas for the private sphere, its inefficiency and/or unwillingness to effect real changes in patriarchal relationships – never bothered to prepare or educate the population for the new gender roles whose construction it declared. Thus women acquired a new type of social/economic equality in addition to their roles of caring and home-making mothers and wives. The double workload became a necessity for them – but also a value. The traditional gender difference was not to be sacrificed either by women or by men. They might have partially safeguarded it for the same reason – as a joint reaction against the homogenization imposed by state-socialist discourse and practice. To a greater degree, however the difference was saved for reasons particularly gendered – and, perhaps, even conflicting: men, unprepared for a gender revolution that might evolve out of the socialist project, clung to the legacy of male patriarchal superiority in various ways. Women, needing

but missing men's help to fulfil their 'emancipated' tasks, may have ceased to rely on them, or even to need them in the family sphere.

To explore a possible social move through state socialism into a post-feminist situation marked by women's independent agency, it is helpful to look to testimonies of oral history – a source that can shed light on how women (and men) 'lived gender', what they internalized from its construction by communist social engineers, how they processed it in their daily lives as workers, wives and mothers (or husbands and fathers). In a contribution to a large international project, 'The Memory of Women',<sup>6</sup> we can, for instance, follow three women of successive generations speaking about how their priorities of having children, families *and* social working lives emerged. We can observe how in this process most of their married relationships were approaching collapse, and trace how newly constructed roles could induce gender conflict: from pre-war years through state socialism into post-communism, the growing self-confidence, responsibility and independent ability on the part of the women interviewed clashed with the increasing decline of the traditional breadwinners' dominance. Can we link with this decline a recurrent confusion and/or uncertainty in the part of their husbands that found expression in their irresponsibility in relationships, their abuse of their partners and arrogance – but also, in one exceptional case (of four marriages discussed), in 'soft' and supportive cooperation?

Women did not protest against going out to work; many women (and men) workers actually felt enthusiastic about the state-socialist project, initially. Though the enthusiasm evaporated quickly, most women came to value their jobs not only economically, but as an opportunity to use their capabilities, to have a social life. This attitude did not change after the collapse of the communist regime: as the polls of the mid-1990s proved, women's preferences to keep a public work life clashed with the conservative political pressures exerted by Czech right-wing parties (Věšíňová-Kalivodová, 1998).

#### LACK OF ANGER AS A PRE-FEMINIST CHARACTERISTIC?

Though state-socialist policies helped women to acquire a position in which their claim to the public sphere seemed socially guaranteed, it has turned out to be a constructed position that the post-communist developments towards a 'neo-liberal democracy' (Einhorn, 2001) have shattered profoundly. Czechs believed that these developments finally opened up possibilities to really manage their lives. However, it has become apparent that in the new conditions women achieve less than men. Those parts of the Czech 'liberalized' labour market that are feminized, such as education, nursing, social work, but increasingly also medical care and

other services, are alarmingly underpaid; in companies' hierarchies, women employees and professionals occupy lower positions; in the labour market, they face negative discrimination. The gender pay gap was widening through the 1990s. On average, women currently earn about 28 percent less than men (Čermáková, 2001). The conditions of prolonged maternity leave (Hašková, 2003) again renders them 'traditionally' dependent on their husbands' income. The leave causes a career break that has already proved to be endangering mothers' return to work. In recent governmental documents (*National Plan*, 1999; *National Action Plan*, 2001, 2002), women with children are already categorized as a social group likely to suffer from long-term unemployment. Through the 1990s, the birth rate decreased to its lowest level in the history of the settlement of the Czech lands, and is the third lowest in Europe (Hartman, 2004).

While, on the whole, the connection of political/economic liberalization with the revived patriarchal social dynamic (also fuelled by a strong backlash against socialist egalitarian policies) is easily comprehensible, the lack of outspoken dissatisfaction on the side of Czech women is truly puzzling.

It may be the state-socialist gender experience that still hinders conscious feminist attitudes. A vast majority of the population still employs the notions generated by the special private/public split constructed by communist totalitarian regimes: the 'private' has not been seen to be inter-linked with the 'public'; the political meanings and connotations of their interconnection have been ignored. While state-socialist policies conserved traditional 'private' roles of women as mothers and homemakers (and many women therefore embraced them affectionately, having a feeling of individual choice), they successfully implanted a universalistic, gender-neutral self-conception into people acting on the totally controlled 'public' scene. The concept of a universal (public) human being, detected by de Beauvoir (1988: 174–6) in totalitarian discourse and practices, became firmly embedded in the consciousness of the Czech people, in the nation's culture, sciences, politics and thought in general. Moreover, the state-socialist public scene, in which genders were seen as represented more or less equally (though they did not actually perform as such), was also a scene in which workers were prevented from competition – instead of individual accomplishment they pursued collective tasks of a planned economy. Thus the illusion of (public) gender equity came into being.

Real democracy, a dream of most people oppressed by the previous regime, must improve life for all – so thought women with social imagination of the state-socialist provenance. Since 1989, few of them have suspected that the common experience of repression might not inherently imply advancement of all; might not save (ideologically constructed) political respect for gender equity for ever. If men do not want the illusion of equity to die because it helps the revived patriarchal modes of



behaviour pass uncontested, women maintaining it opt, in fact, for a dangerous gender blindness in new social developments. They cannot embrace gender as a (constructed and changing) part of identity and of the pursuit of what they want to achieve. Their unpoliticized gender inhibits them in fighting discrimination against them (which is already targeted by governmental reports<sup>7</sup>), and some even deny it in public polemics: In a stance similar to Šiklová's (1999a; on this, see note 3 of this article), professor of law Alena Winterová opposes a woman politician's vision of a Council for Equal Opportunities of Men and Women (Winterová, 2001: 1, 12). Arguing that she has long been legally men's equal and could always act as such, Winterová regards it as offensive that some Council would force its help, or even positive discrimination upon her.

No wonder that it is to such non-feminist – or pre-feminist – voices that the Czech mainstream attend. These voices, trying to present concrete evidence of a gender-neutral individual's unlimited freedom, voices ignoring the dilemmas and conflicts in ever developing gendered reality, help the public debate to *circumvent feminist dissent* and emphasize issues that it interprets as *post-feminist*. In recent years, there has been a slow growing interest by the Czech media in 'women's issues', and the major newspapers and popular periodicals like to focus on the attractive lifestyles of (mainly) female 'singles'. The plethora of such reportage partly serves a new social religion of success. However, it also coarsely reduces the complexity of the gendered compound of public and private lives to a two-way choice for women – either to have a family, or (by usually working harder than men) to pursue a brilliant career.

This new discursive gender construction (that, on the other hand, completely ignores the rising feminization of poverty) confirms and enhances a visible social trend formed by the pressures of the 1990s economic/political transformation. Gender-sensitive sociological research has shown there to be a rising number of younger singles (from 5.6 percent of those under 30 in 1961 to 15.7 percent in 2001), a higher concentration of single women in the under-30 age category than of single men across the whole age range, and gendered differences in social status in the younger singles group: Women, unlike men, are rarely unemployed and rely on better/higher professional qualifications (Radimská and Tomášek, 2003: 10–11).

Other recent sociological research observes *new modes of gender behaviour* at least among the first generation that matured in post-communism times. Interestingly, it is a study by one of the Czech 'gender studies scholars', in whose earlier work marriage, family life, raising children and loyalty to men were explained as important values of Czech womanhood (see criticism in Kodíčková, 2002; Nash, 2002), that relates these new modes of behaviour to changing gender identity under new social conditions. Drawing upon available research results and work in

progress, Marie Čermáková points to the emergence of a collapsing gender contract between male breadwinners and female homemakers. In the culture of individual efforts (while the distanced state invokes the traditional gender responsibilities in individuals less and less successfully), younger women will not accept the social disadvantages of 'their' traditional responsibilities. They will pursue their interests of 'socially equal individuals' who want to attain their own satisfactory social status and chance of not only family, but larger social creativity and freedom (Čermáková, 2003). Yet the future of a society of such individuals (working on the terms of a one-gender, i.e. male, efficiency and output) is seriously endangered if there is no willingness to remodel the gender contract on both sides.

### LACK OF POLITICAL FORCE

The lack of political force and will to urge a new model of the gender contract is a well-known fact, not only in Eastern and Central Europe, but also in established, long-functioning western democracies. Yet there are substantial *differences* between 'new' and 'old' democracies *in relation to the European Union and its policy of gender equality*. It must have been largely the western experience of modern feminism that got sifted into the EU agenda. Judging from descriptions of this agenda, the policy of gender equality has strengthened its position. It is presented as an obligatory political approach in the planning and implementation of all EU policies. In some sense, this development may be interpreted as a post-feminist effect of successful political struggles of the second wave. If West European societies had not acknowledged the claims of modern feminism, there would have been no development of EU policies towards *The Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001–2005* (2000) and its 'dual track approach' of gender mainstreaming and specific actions in favour of women.

Now also the Czech government is obliged to fulfil the European criteria of (inclusive) democracy *and* the rule of law, a functioning market economy *and* social justice and equality. It is clear that during the accession process important steps have been taken: amendments of 1999, 2002 to the Czech Employment Act are aimed against discrimination towards 'certain groups of citizens [who] experience excessive difficulties in access to employment due to their sex, ethnic origin, health condition, age, and other reasons' (*National Plan*, 1999: 30). The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs became the national coordinator of the policy of equal opportunities, which introduces gender mainstreaming. Representatives of women's NGOs have been invited to become members of the Council of the Government for Equal Opportunities of Men and Women (founded in 2001), which signals

beginning cooperation between the state and civil society. Nevertheless, while assessing the establishment of this Council, it is impossible to decide whether it demonstrates a growing political force of civil society, or the fact that the EU imposes its help<sup>8</sup> upon civil society to overcome the 'gap' or 'trap' of its ineffectuality (Einhorn, 2001). In fact, all the aforementioned steps would hardly have been taken without the 'guidance' of the EU, which amounts in effect to the obligation to implement EU recommendations while accepting its financial support. Furthermore, it remains in question how deeply and permanently the application of gender-aware legal measures and policies born in the EU *post-feminist* political culture can affect a society with a largely *pre-feminist* consciousness.

### FEMINIST ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

So far, the enhancement of gender equality that has been tied with the country's accession to the EU has awakened both hopes and worries among Czech feminists. In a post-communist and pre-feminist society, state-regulated gender mainstreaming may become counterproductive. Legal measures in favour of gender equality may remain empty shells. The effects and possible future influences of the EU integration of the Czech Republic and Poland upon women's political agency have been examined by an international project titled 'Constructing Supranational Political Spaces: The European Union, Eastern Enlargement and Women's Agency'.<sup>9</sup> The project, planned for 2002–4 and using as its methods gender-specific textual analysis of the discourses of EU 'eastern enlargement' and narrative interviews (with national and EU politicians; with national and European NGOs), is before publication. However, the results of the textual analysis of one type of EU eastern enlargement discourse – the official Czech/EU pre-accession documents – pose intriguing questions themselves.

Some of them point to serious discrepancies between various EU political discourses. The examination of the EU's strengthened obligation to enhance gender equality (*The Community Framework Strategy*, 2000) as manifested in the EU Employment Strategy reveals the 'additionality' of gender-related concerns. Also after 2000, these concerns remain concentrated just in one of the four pillars of the strategy ('Strengthening of Equal Opportunities Policies for Women and Men Combating Labour Market Discrimination'). The gender-mainstreaming approach is declared, but not incorporated into considerations (or formulations) of concrete directives. What thus resembles rather lip service paid by the EU to gender equality in employment is – not surprisingly – reproduced even more superficially and carelessly by the Czech document (*National Action Plan*, 2001: 31–8).

More doubts concerning the use of equal opportunities discourse in EU documents on employment may arise, perhaps, especially in the minds of readers from 'eastern' accessing countries. Is equality really a target of the planned policies, or does it rather offer convenient terms for delineating economic strategies that were proved to have unequal gender impact, and that lead to the feminization of poverty and/or a collapsing gender contract (see, for example, Čermáková, 2003)? To speak concretely, the EU pressures the Czech state into introducing more flexible work practices because they 'may also have effects on the opportunities for people, *in particular women*, to combine work and family responsibilities' (*Joint Assessment*, 2000: 8; my emphasis). If the Czech labour market adopts EU policies of flexibly employing more citizens for less time (in a global situation of the decline in qualified job opportunities due to technological progress), 'the recent disproportionate decline of women's employment' may be stopped (*Joint Assessment*, 2000: 8). However, because also the gender stereotype is explicitly attached to flexible work practices, more women than men may be expected to become 'flexible' employees, with modest earnings and modest career growth. The same document indirectly criticizes Czech policy, stating that 'in terms of more flexible work practices, the Czech Republic currently has the lowest percentage of people working part-time in the OECD' (*Joint Assessment*, 2000: 8). It is quite clear that this legacy of Czech state socialism – full-time employment of people, and 'in particular women' with their other responsibilities – is to be eradicated.

In the future, feminist watchfulness, resolution and action in addressing local and regional issues will still be necessary, on the side of Czech women as well as women across the globe. In Eastern and Central Europe, there may be potential to generate and radicalize gender-aware and feminist attitudes in educational projects within gender studies. These projects, which draw upon feminist theory whose growth started with the second wave, have represented a major feminist action since the beginning of the communist era in the 1950s. They may become a way to change pre-feminist consciousness.

## NOTES

A first draft of this article was presented at the Third Wave Feminism Conference (organized by the Institute for Feminist Theory and Research, University of Exeter, UK) in July 2002.

1. The expressions containing 'communist/Communist' I use as terms largely synonymous with 'state-socialist' (rule/regime). In my argument, the word 'communist/Communist' has a double motivation: in the fact that the regime in question was a (totalitarian) regime of one political party – the

Communist Party; and in this Party's declared goal of preparing society for the communist social order. The goal itself, used by the propaganda to justify the regime's totalitarian practices, always remained falsely utopian and is beyond reference of expressions containing 'communist/Communist' in this article.

2. Such a perception transpires from the ongoing work of some Czech authors whose 'schizophrenic' position between western feminist and eastern non-feminist/anti-feminist discourses has been marked by their alternatively advocating (e.g. Havelková, 1993; Šiklová, 1993), and trying to radicalize the Czech different gender (in)sensitivity (e.g. Havelková, 1995; Šiklová, 1999b). However, from this empirically split point of view (admitted by both Havelková, 1999, and Šiklová, 1999c), adopted by more authors and speakers of the same generation (and criticized, with insufficient insight, by Nash, 2002; or Kodíčková, 2002), the following observations have been made: in terms of globally applied socioeconomic criteria for gender (in)equality, the situation of Czech women after the communist period is comparatively as advanced as that of women in the West. Yet the state-socialist emancipation acted *against* gender reflectiveness, not to mention feminism. At the same time, essentialist (class) ideology of pseudo-Marxist state socialism made Czechs hostile and protective towards any forms of real or suspected essentialism, or absolute thought models. Proof abounds in many Czech 'anti-ideological' statements from Václav Havel's to those of (many) anti-feminists – but also in opinions of Czech 'gender studies scholars' themselves, who have come to prefer viewing the future development as a plurality of (rather individual) feminisms (Havelková, 1999; Štátná, 1995: 120), or even as individual tasks of utilizing the accomplished emancipation (Šiklová, 1999a).

Younger women – and men – maturing intellectually in the post-communist era may have fought with fewer personalized dilemmas on their way to feminism. Among the feminist acts and activities on various youth scenes during the 1990s, there have even emerged quite radical (left-oriented) ones, which among others seem to be concerned with dangers of (also feminist) globalization and hegemonic political approaches.

3. This was represented by the Women's National Council – the Czech branch of the International Women's Council – and by the Provincial Organization of Progressive Moravian Women (Burešová, 2001: 388). Both were associations of smaller women's professional and interest groups, welcomed members from across a wide political spectrum and pursued objectives of women's social equality with men.
4. Throughout the history of Czechoslovakia (1918–93), the two main nationalities, Czechs and Slovaks, lived in close yet complicated relations, went through different political developments in the Second World War and through not completely the same experience of state socialism. The focus in this article is on the Czech experience.
5. Milada Horáková was already active in the liberal women's movement before the Second World War. She belonged to the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party and worked in the Women's National Council (see note 3). As a result of its peace and anti-fascist campaign, the Council was forced to dissolve in 1942. Its president, F. Plamínková, was arrested and shot dead by the Nazis; Horáková, also arrested in 1944, survived and after the war became the president of the Council's successor organization, the Council of Czechoslovak Women. She was elected a National Socialist parliamentary

- deputy. On Horáková, see, for example, Dvořáková and Doležal (2001) and Iggers (1995: 287–312).
6. See more on this Eastern and Central European project at [www.feminismus.cz](http://www.feminismus.cz). The three interviews interpreted in this article were published by Hradilková (1998, 2002) in a double special issue of *Jedním okem – One Eye Open* on 'Gender and Historical Memory' in the Czech 20th century.
  7. The discrimination against women and their underrepresentation are targeted by the national action plan of enhancing equality of men and women, adopted by the Czech Social Democratic Government in 1998. The social/economic situation viewed through the gender lens and the progress of the plan are reported annually in the *Summary Report on the 'Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Men and Women'*. The realization of the plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
  8. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs itself and also the *National Action Plan of Employment 2002* explain the establishment of this Council as a result of the Czech/EU negotiations and as a project realized (among many others) under the Phare Programme of 2001.
  9. The project is directed by Professor Joanna Regulska of Rutgers University, NJ. It won grants from the US National Science Foundation and the Czech state programme supporting international scientific collaboration. The author of this article is a member of the project's international team.

## REFERENCES

- Burešová, Jana (2001) *Proměny společenského postavení českých žen v první polovině 20. století*. Olomouc: Palacký University.
- Čermáková, Marie (2001) 'Postavení žen v české vědě v 90. letech (Sociologické poznatky o struktuře, podmínkách a perspektivách žen ve sféře vědy)', *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 4: 4–7.
- Čermáková, Marie (2003) 'Genderové identity – ekonomické a sociální souvislosti', *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 1–2: 1–2.
- De Beauvoir, Simone (1988) *The Second Sex*. London: Pan Books. (Orig. pub. 1949.)
- Dvořáková, Zora and Jiří Doležal (2001) *O Miladě Horákové a Milada Horáková o sobě*. Prague: Klub Milady Horákové a EVA – Milan Nevole.
- Einhorn, Barbara (2001) 'Gender and Citizenship in the Context of Democratisation and Economic Transformation in East Central Europe', pp. 97–116 in Gabriele Jähnert, Jana Gohrisch, Daphne Hahn, Hildegard M. Nickel, Iris Peinl and Katrin Schäfergen (eds) *Gender in Transition in Eastern and Central Europe*, Proceedings. Berlin: trafo verlag.
- Fábián, Katalin (2002) 'Cacophony of Voices: Interpretations of Feminism and its Consequences for Political Action among Hungarian Women's Groups', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 9(3): 269–90.
- Hartman, Petr (2004) 'Demografický vývoj naší populace', broadcast by Český rozhlas 13 January; at: [www.rozhlas.cz/cro6/stop/\\_zprava/100943](http://www.rozhlas.cz/cro6/stop/_zprava/100943)
- Hašková, Hana (2003) 'Hranice mateřství', *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 1–2: 4–6.
- Havelková, Hana (1993) 'A Few Pre-Feminist Thoughts', pp. 62–73 in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds) *Gender Politics and Post Communism*. London: Routledge.

- Havelková, Hana (1995) 'Druhé pohlaví s otevřeným koncem', *Sociologický časopis* 31/1: 117–18.
- Havelková, Hana (1999) 'Affidamento', pp. 46–64 in Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma and Eva Klimentová (eds) *Feminismus českýma očima*. Prague: Marie Chřibková.
- Hendrychová, Soňa (1999) 'Z historie feminismu v českých zemích', pp. 43–49 in Hana Maříková and Eva Věšíňová-Kalivodová (eds) *Společnost žen a mužů z aspektu gender*. Prague: Open Society Fund.
- Hradilková, Jana (1998, 2002) 'More than a Family Saga', *Jedním okem – One Eye Open* special issues I: 61–83; II: 143–53.
- Iggers, Wilma A. (1995) *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books.
- Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities of the Czech Republic (2000) at: [www.mpsv.cz](http://www.mpsv.cz)
- Kodíčková, Tereza (2002) 'Are East European Women Eastern or European?', MA thesis, Charles University, Prague.
- Malečková, Jitka (2000) 'Nationalizing Women and Engendering the Nation', pp. 293–310 in Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (eds) *Gendered Nations*. New York: Berg.
- Margolius-Kovály, Heda (2002) 'In a Conversation with One Eye Open – Jedním okem', *Jedním okem – One Eye Open* II (special issue): 1–17.
- Maříková, Hana (2003) 'Rodičovská dovolená a muži', *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 1–2: 6–7.
- Nash, Rebecca (2002) 'Exhaustion from Explanation', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 9(3): 291–309.
- National Action Plan of Employment (2001) at: [www.mpsv.cz](http://www.mpsv.cz)
- National Action Plan of Employment (2002) at: [www.mpsv.cz](http://www.mpsv.cz)
- National Plan of Employment for the CR (1999) English version; at: [www.mpsv.cz/scripts/clanek.asp?lg=2&id=947](http://www.mpsv.cz/scripts/clanek.asp?lg=2&id=947)
- Radimská, Radka and Marcel Tomášek (2003) 'Singles – nový životní styl a jeho genderová specifika v České republice', *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 1–2: 10–11.
- Regular Report from the Commission on CR's Progress Towards Accession (1999) at: [wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/eu.htm](http://wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/eu.htm)
- Sayer, D. (2000) *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Šiklová, Jiřina (1993) 'Are Women in Central and Eastern Europe Conservative?', pp. 74–83 in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds) *Gender Politics and Post Communism*. London: Routledge.
- Šiklová, Jiřina (1999a) 'Jsou české ženy chudinky?', *Lidové noviny* 29 May: 19–20.
- Šiklová, Jiřina (1999b) 'Gender studies a feminismus na univerzitách ve světě a v České republice', pp. 9–19 in Hana Maříková and Eva Věšíňová-Kalivodová (eds) *Společnost žen a mužů z aspektu gender*. Prague: Open Society Fund.
- Šiklová, Jiřina (1999c) 'Únava z vysvětlování', pp. 128–38 in Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma and Eva Klimentová (eds) *Feminismus českýma očima*. Prague: Marie Chřibková.
- Štátní, Jaroslava (1995) 'Ženy v postkomunistických zemích očima západní sociologie', *Sociologický časopis* 31(/1): 119–23.
- Summary Report on the 'Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Men and Women' in 2001 (2002) at: [www.mpsv.cz](http://www.mpsv.cz)
- The Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality 2001–2005 (2000) at: [www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equ\\_opp/strategy\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/strategy_en.html)

- Věšíňová-Kalivodová, Eva (1998) 'The Vision of Czech Women: One Eye Open (Gender Roles in Czech Society, Politics and Culture)', *Dialectical Anthropology* 4: 361–74.
- Věšíňová-Kalivodová, Eva (2002) 'Woman's Creativity as a Social Force: Božena Němcová, a Czech Citizen of the mid-19 c. Austrian Monarchy', pp. 247–61 in Jan Kuklík and Jiří Hasil (eds) *Přednášky z XLV. běhu Letní školy slovanských studií*. Prague: Philosophical Faculty of Charles University.
- Winterová, Alena (2001) 'Nechci být diskriminovaná', *Lidové noviny* 16 May: 1, 12.

Eva Věšíňová-Kalivodová has taught in the Masters programme of Translation Studies (at the School of Philosophy and Arts, Charles University in Prague) since 1991. In 1998, she was one of the founders of the Centre for Gender Studies at the same school, and has taken part in its educational and research work since. Her major research interests are comparative cultural studies, gender interpretation of literary history and gender perspectives on contemporary literature, literary history and on possible gender differences in translations. She has contributed several articles to monographs and professional journals. Among other titles, she has edited the Czech translation of Virginia Woolf's selected literary criticism. She has also translated two novels by Erica Jong into Czech. Address: Institute for Translation Studies, School of Philosophy and Arts, Charles University, Hybernská 3, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic. [email: eva.kalivodova@ff.cuni.cz]

